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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 001909

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SUBJECT: ANKARA SUB-PROVINCES GUARDEDLY OPTIMISTIC ON
MUNICIPALITIES LAW BENEFITS

Classified By: PolCouns John W. Kunstadter; E.O. 12958, reasons 1.4 (b)
and (d).

1. (U) Summary: In discussions in five of Ankara's sub-provincial towns, mayors and other leaders told PolOffs of the difficulties they face as a result of the recent Metropolitan Municipalities Law. Cities which have become part of the Ankara Metropolitan Municipality have yet to see the benefits of this change in terms of services and organized zoning decisions. However, they are reserving their judgment, expecting that things will be better in a year or two. End Summary.

2. (U) In July of 2004, Turkey's President Sezer signed Law No. 5216, commonly referred to as the Metropolitan Municipalities Law (hereafter MML). Among other provisions, this law set new size guidelines and boundaries for metropolitan municipalities in Turkey, and modified guidelines for the administration and functioning of those municipalities. Provisions of the MML include:

- To establish a metropolitan municipality, the population should be 750,000, with a minimum of 3 sub-provinces.
- Boundaries of metropolitan municipalities shall be set according to population (excepting Istanbul and Kocaeli, for which the province boundary is used): for a population of one million, the boundary is 20 km radius from the governor's building; for two million, 30 km radius; for more than 2 million, 50 km radius.
- Sub-provinces within these boundaries shall become metropolitan sub-provincial municipalities, towns will become metropolitan first stage municipalities.

3. (SBU) In a series of trips to Ankara's sub-provinces during the months of February and March 2005 (including Haymana, Polatli, Cubuk, Akyurt, and Bala), PolOffs heard many echoes of the effect the MML has had around Ankara. With a population of over 3 million, Ankara's boundaries as a metropolitan municipality increased to a 50 km radius of the governor's building. Several of the neighboring sub-provinces became part of the Ankara Metropolitan Municipality (AMM) as a result, while in others only the villages closest to Ankara did. Of the places we visited, Cubuk, Akyurt, and Bala became part of the AMM, while Polatli and Haymana proper remained outside the 50 km radius. The mayors of these cities all expressed a certain measure of optimism about the benefits the MML would bring, but pointed out the difficulties it had brought in the short term. Mayors were not alone in noting the impact of the MML, as even the drivers' associations of these cities reported some negative effects.

4. (C) Haymana, the first city we visited, was the first place we heard mention of the MML. While the city of Haymana was outside the 50 km radius, three of its outlying villages had become part of the AMM. Mayor Bunyamin Adaci noted that services such as snow removal that were now the responsibility of the AMM had been slow to arrive. In the next couple years, however, he felt this would improve. Contacts in Mamak and Cubuk echoed these sentiments.

5. (C) Akyurt Mayor Gultekin Ayantas expressed greater optimism on the benefits the MML would bring to Akyurt. According to him, the MML would provide unity and greater authority in city planning. He disparaged the development of "gecekondur" development around cities, saying in Turkey cities get turned into villages, rather than the other way around. Ayantas also noted that Akyurt would receive a larger share of services from Ankara than any of the other sub-provinces. However, the cost for services like water and utilities would increase, for which he expected complaints. In addition, those practicing animal husbandry in the villages would also be negatively affected by city planning regulations restricting animal husbandry. He hoped to counter this negative effect by establishing special zones where people can continue to practice animal husbandry. One of Ayantas' other goals was to bring natural gas to Akyurt. Before the MML, industrialists and businessmen had been working with Botas to bring natural gas, but following the MML's implementation, the mayor of Ankara had promised to bring natural gas himself.

6. (C) Reactions in Bala were similarly mixed. Acting Mayor

Yuksel Yildirim described short-term difficulties, but expressed long-term optimism over the changes brought about by the MML. Yildirim and his advisors said that due to the changes, the Bala municipality is responsible for several thousand more people (14,000 now, as opposed to 6,500 before). Bala will receive a larger sum of money from the Provinces Bank according to this increase, but will also have to give 40% of it to the AMM, leaving Bala taking care of more people with approximately the same amount of income. One of the other problems facing Bala is that with its inclusion in the AMM, authority for zoning decisions now rests with Ankara. A system for dealing with zoning questions will be set up within a couple years, but in the meantime any construction that would require zoning permission (including that done by the city of Bala) is illegal. The general attitude in the mayor's office in Bala is the same as that in the other sub-provinces, though: wait and see.

17. (U) Aside from the mayors, other parts of the population have been affected adversely by the MML. In particular, the drivers' associations in Bala and Akyurt were concerned because the inclusion of their cities in the AMM produced an increase in the dues required for membership in the drivers' association. The levels for dues are standardized and set based on the size and type of the municipality: before the MML, driver dues for Akyurt and Bala were 45 YTL (about \$33); now that both cities are considered part of the "metropolitan municipality," the corresponding dues payment is 122 YTL (about \$90). Ahmet Demirbas of the Akyurt drivers' association said that this increase represents a great hardship for their members. Erbal Erdem, president of the Bala drivers' association, on the other hand, said that most members didn't pay the dues anyway (only to get loans or insurance), so it wasn't a big deal.

18. (SBU) Comment: The approach of the mayors and others in cities of the Ankara province affected by the MML is largely one of "wait and see." Clearly, the Metropolitan Municipality of Ankara has a lot of work ahead in order to measure up to the responsibilities and eventual expectations of its new citizens. Fortunately for the AMM, they seem patient so far. End comment.
EDELMAN